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1762 - 1857

MEMORIALS OF PAUL GRIFFITH
AND HIS WIFE
MARGARET BURDEN
OF
NELSON, MADISON COUNTY, N. Y.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF SOME OF THEIR DESCENDANTS

BY

MINNIE L. WHITE

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A Poem by Paul Griffith

1. Where shall I go and comfort find
In my Bewidowed State?
The man is gone who was so kind,
My dear and loving Mate.

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2. Now like a Disconsolate Dame
I'm left all alone for to mourn.
Oh, may the kind powers above
Show pity to me while alone!

3. I look through the rooms of my house
And don't see its Singer? smile and turn.
While searching I find not my spouse
Nor will he to me e'er return.

4. How lonesome my tale to me;
How empty the place where he set!
What lonesome Devotion I pray
Where once we so sweetly did meet.

5. And still for to lessen my grief
My sons a kind Methodical father have lost;
They can't go to him for release.
May we in God put our trust.

Recd Oct 24-1978

PAUL GRIFFITH

Paul Griffith was born in Scituate, Rhode Island. May 29, 1762. His father, Robert Griffith, was a mate on a vessel, but was lost at sea. His widow had a vision, one night, as she sat in front of the fireplace, and she saw him standing with dripping wet clothes in front of the fire. Frightened, she threw her apron over her head. After a time she removed it, and he still stood there. She could not speak. Later she felt she could get courage to speak to him, and uncovered her head, but he was gone. On his deathbed the captain was in great distress of mind and kept saying, "I didn't do right by Griffith".

I do not know how many children there were, but Paul had a brother Joseph and a sister Abigail, who married a man named Jenks. As there were very few schools in those days, Mr. Jenks taught Paul to read and write, and also the blacksmith trade, then considered a desirable trade. When he was only sixteen years old, he joined the Revolutionary Army at Bristol, Rhode Island, and enlisted for nine months in Captain Nathan Olney's Company, Colonel Archibald Crary's Rhode Island Regiment. When that term expired, he re-enlisted in June, 1780, at Killingly, Connecticut, and served until December, 1780, in Captain David Cady's Company, Colonel Simon's Connecticut Regiment, and then served until spring

under Captain Dutcher of the Artificiers. He worked on the great chain thrown across the Hudson to prevent the British Army from joining the rest of their army at the North. In 1885 sixteen links were recovered from the river. Some of them now form a circle on the campus at West Point, New York, where one can see them. *

After the war he lived in Massachusetts, Vermont, then in Cheshire, Massachusetts, and New Ashford, Massachussetts. He wrote in his account book, "I come to Ashford, 1797."

He married Margaret Burden, born June 3, 1763. She died in 1812. There children were: John, who died in infancy; Isaac, who married Joanna Brown; John who married Jane Aeffion; Otis, born March 9, 1796, who never married; Diana, who married William Paine; Abigail, born November 10, 1801 or 1802, who married Alva Denison and who died December 23, 1840.

It has been said that Paul Griffith came to Nelson in 1807. He bought a farm of 350 acres and built a house on the bank of a little stream which was fed by a little spring a few feet above the house. The trees had to be marked so that people would not get lost. Trees also had to be cut down and then a hill of corn or barley had to be sown around the stump. When the grain was gathered, it was placed in a sack, and Paul would put it over his shoulder and take it eight miles

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* The largest link weighed 115 tons; the smallest 86 tons.

to have it ground at Cazenovia, and then carry the meal home again over his shoulder. He would go to Albany to get needed supplies for his family and neighbors. This took two weeks. During a heavy snow storm, while away on one of these trips, his wife died. This must have been in 1812, as Abigail was then ten years old. She told my mother she had often heard the wolves howl around the house at night. In those days tailoresses would go to familes and sew for weeks, making up the material, mostly homespun woolens and linens into clothing for the men, women, and children of the family. A tailoress who was lame, named Jemima Meade, came to live and make a home for Paul and his son Otis after his wife's death. In 1815 he sold 150 acres of land to Nathan Shephard for $800, and 25 acres to his son Otis for $172.75.

There must have been many trials in the Nelson home. Paul's daughter Diana, who married William Paine, lost a baby, and she had typhus fever, In that day a doctor would not allow a fever patient to have a drink of water, and she died, begging for water. Her husband died of typhus fever about the same time. Their little son was taken to the home of his Grandfather Paine and died when he was nine years old. Grandfather Griffith said he had been fed almost entirely on beans.

Paul Griffith was given a pension October 8, 1832 (it was stolen and he never received it.) by the federal

government.

There were few opportunities for women to earn money, so when a factory was started, Abigail went there to work. Pails of water had to be carried up two flights of stairs to wet the flyings. She soon had a hemorrhage and had to leave. About 1826 she married Alva Denison. He was tall, had mild dark eyes, dark hair, and was well proportioned. She had a rather long face and blue eyes. Years later the wife of Judge Lyon told my mother that one day Alva, who was a cabinet maker, and his wife came to see a sideboard which had been imported from England, and they were the handsomest couple that she ever saw. Their first child, a son, was born in Erieville, but died in infancy. The second child, Diana, was born November 11, 1831. She married Reverend John M. Langworthy, a graduate of Madison University (now Colgate University). He served in the Civil War and was pastor of several churches in Central and Eastern New York. He was one of the trustees and founders of Keuka College, and was Vice-President at the time of his death. He died August 17, 1896. Diana had taught ten years before her marriage and was a gifted writer. Their second daughter, Maranda, was born in Erieville, October 31, 1833. She married Pardon Davenport. She lived in Erieville, Springville (about 1835), Pennsylvania, Conneaut, Ohio, Erieville and Georgetown and Vernon, Michigan. Their third child, Dwight, was born October 19, 1836, in

Springville. He died in New Woodstock, New York, November 10, 1886.

While Diana Denison was in Springville, some relatives who had moved to Pennsylvania wrote and urged them to locate there, as land was cheap. So they moved to the town of Hayfield, Crawford County, Pennsylvania. This town was opposite Hagerstown, Maryland. The French Creek flowed between the two places. Although Diana was very young, two things about this place impressed her, one being that water was brought into people's cellars and flowed into troughs, where wooden racks were placed over the water, and milk pans were set there for the milk to cool, until the cream could rise, and sometimes snakes came into the troughs. The other was that the people believed that evil spirits were abroad at night, and so they would not go out of doors at night.

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Abigail wrote to her father, Paul, asking Jemima to send her stocking yarn so that the girls could go to school that winter since there were no sheep there, as it was all woods. Paul Griffith visited Abigail in Pennsylvania, and another time Jemima visited them there. Jemima used to ride horseback from Nelson to Truxton and Cuyler. She died at one of these places during a visit.

Sometime before this, Alva's father, Palmer Denison, and his son Lemuel had gone to Ohio to live. In the fall

of 1836 they had come back to visit their relatives. On their way back to Ohio they visited Alva and his family in Pennsylvania. They took Maranda, who was three years old, back with them to Ohio, with the understanding that Alva's family should move to Ohio the following spring. As yellow fever had broken out in a village a few miles away and there was no work in Hayfield, they moved to Conneaut, Ashtabula County, Ohio. At Conneaut Abigail's health was poor, so the time came when she wrote her father, telling him she was not well, and asking him to come and help them return to Nelson. When he received his daughter's letter, he was seventy six years old. He started from Nelson with a horse and cutter. He had crossed into Pennsylvania when his horse died, and he bought another. He found a little further on, that the snow had melted. Leaving his cutter until his return (although he never secured it) he pursued the remainder of his journey on horseback. He had to ford many swollen streams on horseback. What a joyful meeting it must have been when he finally arrived! A wooden frame was made for the sleigh and covered with cotton cloth, much like a prairie wagon. A bake kettle with legs, in which live coals were placed, was put inside with charcoal, and blocks of wood were also heated. A twenty pound turkey had been roasted, a large amount of baked pork and beans was carried, dried beef, bread, and tea, also, and it was planned to buy warm food part of the day,

and to stop at inns or private houses at night. Dwight was only two years old. The cow was led, with her calf following, the ox team fastened to the cotton-covered sleigh, a rocking chair placed inside, and the long journey commenced, which took twenty-eight days before they reached Nelson. Once they stopped at a blind woman's house and she made baskets, which seemed very wonderful to my mother. At Springville, New York, they visited a cousin of Abigail's, Archibold Griffith, a farmer, merchant, and teacher. He gave Abigail a camlet coat, and long woolen stockings to the girls. He and his wife had no children of their own, but had adopted two or three, educated them, and, when they married, gave them each a farm. He endowed the school later, and it is still called Griffith's Institute. He wanted to adopt my mother, but her mother would not consent, as she would not separate the children. They rested a few days, then were met by Abigail's brother Isaac, (with a span of colts and a sleigh), who took them to his home in Nelson. It took the father with his ox team three days longer. They returned to Nelson in March, and, later that summer lived on Tinsler Hill, above Grandfather Griffiths' place.

The next summer they moved to Georgetown and the family lived there a little over a year. It was there the mother, Abigail, died December 23, 1840. After Abigail died, the two younger children, Maranda and Dwight,

went to live with their grandfather, Paul Griffiths. Diana stayed with her father for about two years. About 1841 Alva married Mrs. Betsy Brown. Their children were, Rhoda, who married a Brown and went to live in Minnesota; Uriah, who died in the Civil War; Alva, who died young; James, who went to Minnesota, and of whom, along with his sister, we have lost all trace.

Alva, the father, went to visit his brothers and father, Palmer Denison, in Ohio in 1846, and died there of typhus fever that fall. His widow later married Judge Gaston of Morrisville, New York. She died in Morrisville in 1866.

Diana Denison, a slender girl, was carrying her her half-sister, Rhoda, a heavy baby. Her grandfather, Paul, saw it was too hard for her, so had her come to live at his home in Nelson. The school was over a mile away, and not very good, so she went to live at a place where she could get her board by helping with the work and go to school. The time came when she went to live at Mrs. Lyons', and was there for three years. At seventeen she began teaching, and all that summer every man she saw approaching she though might be her father. It was three years, when a cousin came for a visit from Ohio, before she learned of her father's death. She taught for ten years, and then married the Reverend John Martin Langworthy, A.M.

Addenda to Material on Paul Griffith's Life

Paul had been in battles and was at Valley Forge. He told of leaving his footprints of blood there.

When she was eighteen, his granddaughter Maranda married Pardon Davenport. The young couple went to live with Paul for a time, then with Otis; later they bought a farm in Georgetown and they all moved there. In the home were Weems' story of the Revolution, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", and Fox's Book of Martyrs.

He had read his Bible through five times.

He gave 125 pounds of maple sugar for a cauldron kettle.

Paul Griffith died in Georgetown January 2, 1857, aged 95 years, 7 months, 4 days. He is buried beside his wife Margaret Burden, and daughter Abigail, in the Lyon's Cemetery near Erieville, N. Y. (Madison County).

"Soldier, Traveller, Pioneer, Builder, and Father of his own children and grandchildren -- no wonder that we love him!"

From Paul Griffith's Account Book

Paul Griffith, His Book:
God give him grace wherein to look
That he may run a heavenly race
And Heaven may be his dwelling place.

I came in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-Two.

Ebenezer

Cheshire,

£.S.d.
"To one day work with myself and oxen-4-6
To draw one Lode of hay---------------0-1-6
Drawing 23 Boshels of ashes to Bacon's store 6-0

Janawary the 31 day 1793 (debtor)
Aparl the 12 day 1793 Titis Rice dr.-to work
to makin a guage and Pooting a sleds tong 2-0
May 16 day putting in
To tow days work making fence------------0-5-0
To - and mowing road one month ----------0-0-6"